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A

SCRIPTURE-MANUAL:

OR,

A PLAIN REPRESENTATION

OF THE

ORDINANCE of BAPTISM.

Designed for the Use of all, who would answer a good Conscience towards God; and give a Reason of their *Faith* and *Practice* with Meekness and Fear.

Search the Scriptures. John v. 39.

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Revised by JOHN RIPPON.

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THE PREFACE.

THE very extraordinary zeal, which has lately been expreſſed from the pulpit, and the preſs, for Infant-baptiſm, as an ordinance of God, *or of* unqueſtionable *and* divine authority, *put me on reviewing the evidence, by which I was formerly convinced of the contrary.*

And as I don't remember to have met with any thing on the ſubject exactly in this form; if it has no other advantage, it may point out a method *of enquiry to thoſe who make the word of God the rule of their faith and practice.*

There are ſome few hints taken from modern authors; but the main is the judgment I formed of thoſe things at the time referred to.

I have only to add, I am not conſcious of a wilful miſinterpretation of any text, but have faithfully given what I apprehended to be the real ſenſe of the Holy Ghoſt; to whoſe influence and bleſſing I humbly recommend it.

S. W.

A

SCRIPTURE-MANUAL, &c.

THAT Baptiſm is an *ordinance* of Jeſus Chriſt, is admitted by the generality of thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians. That it is of *ſtanding uſe* in the church of God, appears from the § nature of the inſtitution when rightly underſtood, and the promiſe of the great Head of the church to his miniſters in the adminiſtration of it; *lo, I am with you* alway, *even to the end of the world.*

And as this ordinance is diſtinguiſhed from others, in its limitation to a *ſingle* adminiſtration, without repetition; great care ſhould be taken, that we act agreeable to the mind of Chriſt in it: what is to be done but once in the Chriſtian's life ought to be done well.

§ A ſolemn acknowledgement of the divine glories, and a profeſſed ſubjection to the authority of Father, Son, and Spirit, with a thankful recognition of the burial and reſurrection of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; in the view of which we deſire to die unto ſin, and live unto holineſs.

It is certain, men are apt to run into extremes; ſome may poſſibly make *too much* of Baptiſm, ſuppoſing it to be a *regenerating*, or *juſtifying* ordinance; that it waſhes away the guilt of original ſin, and is always accompanied with the conveyance of grace. ——Others may think as meanly of it, as a mere circumſtantial ritual, or teſt of obedience to a poſitive precept, with little, if any ſpiritual meaning.

Nor are men, good and learned men, leſs divided about the *ſubjects* and *mode* of this ſacred inſtitution. If this aroſe from the obſcurity or ambiguity of the terms in which it is revealed, it might carry the appearance of ſome reflection on the wiſdom of the law-giver; it being a duty of common concern, in which the plaineſt Chriſtian is as deeply intereſted, as men of the greateſt capacity or literature: but if it appears, that God has not been wanting in this matter, and that the ſcripture account of it is in terms of a determinate meaning, and eaſy to be underſtood; whatever darkneſs may attend our minds, we have no room to quarrel with revelation.

It is now near thirty years, ſince I firſt examined this matter: and I am ſure no one could enter into the inquiry, with more earneſt deſire to find it on the ſide of the *common practice*; all my converſation and proſpects leaning ſtrongly that way.

The method I took was, I hope in a dependence on God, whoſe direction I earneſtly implored, to collect the whole evidence from ſcripture, to conſider carefully every part ſeparately, that I might know what was his good and acceptable will in this ſervice.

And whether I ſhould happily attain the deſireable end or not, I remember I found great peace in the integrity of the determination. Accordingly looking up to heaven, I ſet myſelf to ſearch the ſcriptures,

The queſtions before me were,

Whether believers, or perſons profeſſing faith and repentance only,

Or believers and their natural offſpring, or infants in common were the proper ſubjects of baptiſm?

And whether the manner of adminiſtration was by immerſion or plunging, or by ſprinkling or pouring; or whether either might be uſed indifferently?

Conſidering

Conſidering that Baptiſm was an ordinance peculiar to the goſpel-diſpenſation; I thought it moſt natural, to expect an account of it in the New Teſtament. Accordingly I began with the goſpel of St. *Matthew*, and in the third chapter met with the following deſcription of *John*'s baptiſm.

In thoſe days came John *the* Baptiſt, *preaching in the wilderneſs of* Judea; *and ſaying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* That, *then went out to him* Jeruſalem, *and all* Judea, *and all the region round about* Jordan, *and were baptized of him in* Jordan, *confeſſing their ſins.*—And that *when he ſaw many of the* Phariſees *and* Sadducees *come to his Baptiſm*, he ſaid unto them, *O generation of vipers, who hath warned you*, &c. *Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance, and think not to ſay within yourſelves, we have* Abraham *to our father*, &c.

Here I found that *John* had a ſpecial commiſſion given him, to preach and baptize.

That the ſubſtance of his miniſtry, was the doctrine of repentance, in the view of the near approach of the Meſſiah; *repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

That his ſucceſs was very extraordinary, multitudes flocking after him, to hear him preach, and be baptized of him, *Jeruſalem, and all Judea, and the region round about*, &c.

That the place of his preaching, was the wilderneſs; and of his baptizing, the river *Jordan*.

That the action was baptizing——

And that the diſpoſition of mind required in the ſubjects was *repentance*; and ſuch repentance as ſhould be productive of good fruits: and where this was wanting, a relation to *Abraham* as their father did not entitle them to his baptiſm.

This appeared to me to be the ſum of the account; and I could not help obſerving,

There is no intimation of children being brought by their parents to *John*.

Not a word of his baptizing them.

No recommendation of this to their parents, as a duty to be afterwards performed by them, in conſequence of their being proſelyted to his doctrine. No hint of pouring or ſprinkling; but that *John* baptized the people in the river *Jordan*, and that he did this on their repentance or profeſſion of it. Thus far the evidence being for adult baptiſm, I proceeded to

conſider the baptiſm of our Lord, as deſcribed in the ſame chap. verſes 13, 14, 15, 16. *Then cometh* Jeſus *from* Galilee *to* Jordan, *to* John *to be baptized of him. But* John *forbad him, ſaying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comeſt thou to me? And* Jeſus *anſwering, ſaid unto him, ſuffer it to be ſo now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteouſneſs. Then he ſuffered him. And* Jeſus, *when he was baptized, went up ſtraightway out of the water*, &c.

Here I obſerved our Lord did not ſend to *John* to come and baptize him, but went himſelf from *Galilee* to *Jordan*, the place where *John* was baptizing; offered himſelf as a ſubject.—— *John*, apprehenſive of his ſuperior glory, modeſtly refuſes. Our Lord inſiſts on it, as a part of righteouſneſs it became him to fulfil. *John* baptized him, and as * *Mark* expreſsly ſays, *in* the river *Jordan*; and from the expreſſion of his coming out of the water, I concluded it was by immerſion.

I took notice of a difference between this, and the former account. Here was no preaching on *John*'s part; no repentance required of, or confeſſed by our Lord Jeſus previous to baptiſm; theſe the dignity and purity of his perſon rendered unneceſſary. He had the richeſt unction of the Holy Spirit, and was holy, harmleſs, and undefiled.—However he appeared with great zeal to engage in the duty; and I thought he ſpoke as the head of the church, and example of his people, when he ſaid, *Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteouſneſs.*

The next place I conſulted, was *Matt.* xix. 13, 14. compared with *Mark* x. 13. and *Luke* xviii. 15.

Then were there brought unto him little children, that he ſhould put his hands on them and pray: and the diſciples rebuked them But Jeſus ſaid, ſuffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me: for of ſuch is the kingdom of heaven.

This I had often heard quoted in favor of infant-Baptiſm, and therefore though I did not find the word *baptize* in the text, I thought it deſerved a particular conſideration.

And the firſt thing which came before me, was the *deſire* of the parents or friends of thoſe children, or what they aimed at in bringing them to Chriſt; and the evangeliſt *Matthew* ſays, it was that he ſhould *put his hands on them and pray*. *Mark* and *Luke* ſay, that he might *touch them*; neither of them give the leaſt hints as to any deſire or requeſt that they might be baptized. I

* Mark i. 9.

I then conſidered the conduct of our Lord on this occaſion, and the text ſays, *he took them up in his arms, put his hands on them, and bleſſed them.* *This*, and no more, our Lord did at this time, as I could find, by comparing the evangeliſts

This led me to conſider the reluctance of the diſciples, that theſe children ſhould be brought, and our Lord's diſpleaſure ſignified by his check of them, *ſuffer little children to come unto me, for of ſuch is the kingdom of heaven.*

What the diſciples reaſon was for oppoſing them, is not recorded: I thought it could not be from an *unwillingneſs* that infants ſhould be *baptized*, had that been the practice of *John*, or the known will of their Maſter. This they could hardly be guilty of; nor does our Lord take the leaſt notice of it in his reproof: it is likely they were uneaſy he ſhould be interrupted from attending to matters, they judged of greater importance but however this was, I found they ſtood reproved and the reaſon given was,

For of ſuch is the kingdom of heaven.

Here I conſidered *the kingdom of heaven* muſt intend the kingdom of grace, or of glory.

And firſt, I began with the kingdom of grace, and preſently ſaw, that muſt either be the inviſible church or general aſſembly of the firſt-born whoſe names are written in heaven, or particular churches conſtituted in goſpel-order: for I could have no notion of a *national* church, under the New Teſtament-diſpenſation. Accordingly I brought infants to each of theſe, endeavouring to come at the truth. As to the inviſible church, conſiſting only, as I could ſee, of the election of grace, I thought whether *all*, or *who* among infants are a part of it, could only be known to God; and this being a matter wholly unrevealed, could not ſee how it could give them a right to Baptiſm.

As to particular churches, it did not appear that infants were *claimed* or *treated* as members; nor could I underſtand their capacity for membership, which ſeemed to be founded in the New Teſtament, on a *declared agreement* of the ſaints in principles and experience.

I then conſidered the kingdom of glory, conſiſting in the beatific viſion, and enjoyment of God. And here I preſent

preſently found, my wiſhes out-run revelation; and in the iſſue was obliged to leave infants to the ſovereign mercy of him, who is the Judge of the earth, and will do nothing but what is right. Nor could I ſee, on the ſuppoſition of their being *all* admitted to that kingdom, of which I could find no *ſcripture* aſſurance, that their right to baptiſm was evinced, without a *ſpecial order* from the Law giver of the church, or ſome *neceſſary* connection between that ordinance and eternal life.

Muſing on theſe things, I looked a little farther, and ſoon found the difficulty removed, and the expreſſion cleared up, *of ſuch is the kingdom of heaven*; that is, as our Lord adds, *verily, I ſay unto you, whoſoever ſhall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he ſhall not enter therein*, or as *Luke* has it, *in no wiſe enter therein.*

It now appeared, that our Lord was ſpeaking of the *temper*, and not merely of the perſons of children; and what greatly confirmed me, was a parallel paſſage, *Matt.* xviii. 2, 3. Jeſus *called a little child and ſet him in the midſt of them, and ſaid, verily I ſay unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye ſhall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* And adds, *whoſoever therefore ſhall humble himſelf as this little child, the ſame is the greateſt in the kingdom of heaven, and whoſo ſhall receive one ſuch little child in my name, receiveth me: and whoſoever ſhall offend one of theſe little ones which believe in me, it were better for him, that a milſtone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the ſea.*

Here I compared the expreſſions of *receiving* Chriſt, and receiving one of theſe little ones, making profeſſion *of his name*, and the little ones, *believing in him*, with the dreadful nature of the threatning in offending them; and I could not ſee how theſe could be applicable to mere infants, but were all well adapted to younger or weaker Chriſtians.

Upon the whole, after the ſtricteſt ſearch, I could find in theſe texts nothing relating to Baptiſm. Nor could I help thinking, had it been the intention of our Lord that infants ſhould be baptized, he would not have omitted the practice,

or

or ſome diſcourſe about it, on occaſions which ſeemed ſo naturally to lead him to it.

Failing of my hoped for diſcovery of Infant-Baptiſm here, I haſtened to the

Commiſſion recorded *Matt.* xxviii. 18, 19, 20. compared with *Mark* xvi. 15, 16.

All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt. Teaching them to obſerve all things, whatſoever I have commanded you: and lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

Struck with the ſupreme authority of a riſen Jeſus, I concluded from the ſolemnity of the introduction, it muſt be a very *heinous affront*, to *add*, *alter*, or *take away* from the ſacred commandment. And with a mind I truſt, poſſeſſed with reverence of his Majeſty, I entered into a meditation on the precept. Here I found the perſons charged with the commiſſion were the apoſtles; who, notwithſtanding the eminence of their character, and peculiars of their after unction, were not to *make*, but *publiſh* and *explain* the laws of Chriſt. *That*, and only that which they received of the Lord, were they to declare to the church. And from the nature of the duty enjoined, and the reach of the promiſe *even to the end of the world*, I judged all goſpel-miniſters to be included in the commiſſion.

The duty enjoined, or ſervice to be performed, was to teach and baptize.

Or as I underſtood it, to make diſciples by teaching (for I could not think of any other way) and then to baptize them.

The ſubjects of inſtruction and baptiſm, were *all nations*, or as *Mark* has it, all the *world*, and every creature, *Gentiles*, as well as *Jews*; not every individual, for the abſurdity of that was moſt glaring; but ſuch as were capable of receiving the doctrine, and making a profeſſion of it, in order to Baptiſm.

The time of baptizing, according to the evangeliſt *Mark*, ſeemed to be when they believed; or as *Matthew* has it, when they were taught or made diſciples. And the *manner* in which, when I conſidered the principal, moſt com-

mon and natural ſenſe of the word *Baptiſm*, with the uſe of it in *John*'s baptiſm, appeared to me to be by immerſion; and I was the more confirmed in this, from *John*'s chuſing a place to baptize in, where there was much water, *John* iii. 23. I tried, and tried again, to bring in infants under the general term of *all nations*; but *Mark's believeth and is baptized*, with *Matthew's* teaching *them* to obſerve whatſoever I have commanded you, obliged me to conclude it muſt be confined to the adult.

Thus far the ballance ſeemed to be on the ſide of the Antipædobaptiſts; but having determined when I ſet out, to examine the whole evidence, I purſued the enquiry, and being thoroughly ſatisfied that the apoſtles could not miſtake their maſter; I thought if I was miſtaken in my apprehenſion of his will, in the commiſſion, I ſhould be ſet right by their conduct. I began with *Peter*'s ſermon, *Acts* ii.

The point the apoſtle aimed at, I found in verſe 37. *Therefore let all the houſe of* Iſrael *know aſſuredly, that God hath made that ſame Jeſus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Chriſt.* In this he aſſerts the glory of the perſon crucified, he was Lord of all, and charges them directly with his murder; they had crucified, or with wicked hands had ſlain him.

The effect was, *They were pricked in the heart, and cried out, Men and brethren what ſhall we do?* Upon which Peter ſaid unto them, *Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the remiſſion of ſins, and ye ſhall receive the gift of the Holy Ghoſt. For the promiſe is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God ſhall call.* It is added, ver. 41. *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the ſame day there were added unto them, about three thouſand ſouls. And they continued in the apoſtles doctrine and fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.* And ver 44. *All that believed were together, and had all things common*, &c.

Here I obſerved how *Peter* underſtood his commiſſion; he began with *preaching* or *teaching*—waiting for the ſucceſs of his labour. Nor did I find a word of Baptiſm, till they were *pricked in their hearts*; *then* indeed, and not before, he

he ſays, *repent and be baptized, in the name of the Lord Jeſus:* which I underſtood after this manner: If you are indeed grieved and aſhamed of your conduct towards this Jeſus whom you have crucified: If you are convinced by the Spirit of God, he is the promiſed Meſſiah, the great Redeemer, and King of his church, and have a fiducial dependance on him for ſalvation then you are to be baptized in his name, and may hope for a comfortable evidence in your Baptiſm, of the remiſſion of your ſins, and that you ſhall receive the gift of the Holy Ghoſt. And for their encouragement he adds, for the *promiſe is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God ſhall call.*

Now I thought the evidence of children's right to Baptiſm began to open, eſpecially as I had often heard this verſe mentioned as an inconteſtible proof of it. But being willing to ſee with my own eyes, I conſidered what this promiſe might be: the text indeed I found, if not wholly ſilent, yet not direct and expreſſive; but on cloſe reflection, I thought it muſt be either

The great promiſe of the Meſſiah, as the ſeed of *Abraham*, in whom all nations ſhould be bleſſed; or

Of the remiſſion of ſins for his ſake: or of the gift of the Holy Ghoſt.

Accordingly I brought infants to each of theſe; and preſently ſaw as to the firſt, the great honour which was done to the *Jews* and their offspring, that Chriſt ſhould be allied to them according to the fleſh; but found no reaſon to conclude that all *Abraham*'s natural children, were the children of the promiſe as to the ſpiritual part of it; nor could I ſee how the *general* promiſe of the Meſſiah, as the ſeed of *Abraham*, could give them a right to Baptiſm, if impenitent and uncalled, any more than the *Gentiles*, or thoſe afar off.

As to the promiſe of the remiſſion of ſins, I ſaw not how it could be claimed, but by *believers*. And as to the gift of the Holy Ghoſt, if it was of the ſame kind with what had but lately poured out upon the Apoſtles, the thing ſpoke for itſelf: there was no room to expect it in a ſtate of infancy.

By *Children*, then, I apprehend muſt be meant their *offspring* when *called*; and then I could eaſily apply the promiſe to them in any or all the foregoing ſenſes.

Upon the whole I found, *Peter* preach'd,
The people repented, and gladly received the word—were baptized,
added to the church.
and walked in fellowſhip;
and encouragement was given to their offspring, that with the ſame *experience*, or when *called*, they might look for the ſame privileges.

I could not but think, had the Apoſtle intended to expreſs their right as infants to Baptiſm, it was *ſtrange*, very *ſtrange*, that no notice ſhould be taken, either then or afterwards, of the adminiſtration of it.

The next account of Baptiſm I met with, was *Acts* viii. 12.

But when they believed Philip, *preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jeſus, they were baptized both men and women.*

Here I found the Evangeliſt agree with the Apoſtle, and both keeping cloſe to the commiſſion. *Philip* begins with preaching the Goſpel, *or things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Chriſt.* The people believed; and *when* they did ſo, and not before, he baptized them—And they are ſaid to be *men* and *women*; the phraſe I took to be expreſſive of the extent, and limitation of the ordinance; not men *only*, but men and women; not men, women and children, but men and women *only*.

And indeed, I thought it could not be otherwiſe if a perſonal faith, and a profeſſion of it were pre-requiſite to Baptiſm. And theſe I found were inſiſted on by this Evangeliſt, in the caſe of the eunuch, recorded in the ſame chapter: The account of which ſtands thus:

Verſes 26, 27, 28, &c.

The angel of the Lord ſpake unto Philip, ſaying, ariſe and go toward the ſouth, &c. and he aroſe and went, and behold a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch, &c. who had come to Jeruſalem for to worſhip, was returning, and ſitting in his chariot, and read Eſaias the prophet. Then the ſpirit ſaid unto Philip, go near and join thyſelf to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Eſaias, and ſaid, underſtandeſt thou what thou readeſt? And he ſaid, how can I, except ſome man ſhould guide me; and he deſired Philip that he would come up and ſit with him. The place of the ſcripture which he read was this, he was led as a ſheep to the ſlaughter,

&c.

&c. *The eunuch anſwered Philip, and ſaid, I pray thee of whom ſpeaketh the prophet this,* &c. *Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the ſame ſcripture, and preached unto him Jeſus; and as they went on their way, they came to a certain water; and the eunuch ſaid, ſee here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip ſaid, if thou believeſt with all thine heart, thou mayeſt. And he anſwered and ſaid, I believe that Jeſus Chriſt is the ſon of God.—And he commanded the chariot to ſtand ſtill: And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him; and when they were come up out of the water, the ſpirit of the Lord caught away Philip, and the eunuch ſaw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.*

This appeared to me to be a plain and expreſſive account of the *ſubjects* and *mode* of Baptiſm. *Philip* begins with teaching, or preaching Chriſt as a Saviour, and Sovereign: The eunuch deſires to be baptized: *Philip* inſiſts on a confeſſion of his faith: The eunuch gives him ſatisfaction: They both go out of the chariot, and *Philip* baptizes him: And I could not help obſerving the peculiarity of the phraſes; they went down *both* into the water, *both Philip* and the eunuch; and when they were *come up out* of the water, &c. which ſtrongly impreſſed my mind, that the baptiſm of the eunuch was by immerſion: and muſt be deſigned to deſcribe ſomething more than barely going to the ſide or brink of the water.

The next inſtance of baptiſm was that of *Cornelius*, recorded *Acts* xth.

And of him, it is ſaid, verſe the ſecond, he was *a devout man, and one that feared God with all his houſe.* Which I underſtood not of mere babes, if he had any; but of thoſe who were in ſome meaſure grown up, capable under a divine influence of forming ſome apprehenſions of the glory of God, and their obligations to revere and ſerve him.

By the direction of an angel he ſends for *Peter*—*Peter* begins with preaching: God owns his miniſtry: The Holy Ghoſt falls on *all* thoſe which heard the word; and *Peter* aſks, *Can any man forbid water, that theſe ſhould not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghoſt, as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized.*

Here I found the commiſſion ſtrictly regarded and kept up to, an exact conformity with the forementioned inſtances of Baptiſm; and comparing the expreſſions of *fearing God with*

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all his houſe, ver. 2. and their receiving the *like gift with thoſe who believed in the Lord Jeſus*, mentioned chap. xi. ver. 17. I ſaw no reaſon to ſuppoſe that infants were of that number.

This led me to conſider the converſion and baptiſm of *Lydia*, of whom we read, *Acts* xvi. 14. that ſhe was *a ſeller of purple of the city of* Thyatira, *who worſhipped God*, and heard the Apoſtle; *whoſe heart the Lord opened, and ſhe attended unto the things which were ſpoken of Paul: and was baptized, and all her houſhold.*

As to *Lydia*, I thought there could be no diſpute, whether ſhe believed before ſhe was baptized; the text aſſerting that ſhe *worſhipped God* and that the *Lord opened her heart.*

As to her houſehold, what it conſiſted of is not ſaid; nor is any notice taken of her huſband, if ſhe had any; all that appeared to me, from a careful examination of the account was, that ſhe was not at home, or in the place of her common reſidence; that ſhe came to ſell her purple, had a houſe for that purpoſe and probably ſervants to aſſiſt her in her trade; nor could I ſee it altogether conſiſtent with prudence, to bring a family of young children, if ſhe had any, into the hurries of buſineſs.

Upon the whole, I thought it might be ſuch a houſe as *Cornelius* had; who if they did not fear God before, were converted by a bleſſing on the Apoſtle's miniſtry, and baptized with their miſtreſs. And what greatly tended to confirm me in this, was, that the perſons the Apoſtle found in *Lydia*'s houſe when he entered into it, are called *brethren*, and were *comforted* by him; which cannot be ſaid of infants; as alſo the account of the converſion of the jaylor and his family contained in the ſame chapter, ver. 25. 26, 27, &c. which is as follows.

At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, &c. *Suddenly there was a great earthquake*, &c. *The keeper of the priſon would have killed himſelf. Paul cried with a loud voice, ſaying, do thyſelf no harm. The* keeper *called for a light, and ſprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and ſaid, ſirs, What muſt I do to be ſaved? and they ſaid, believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved, and thy houſe. And they ſpoke unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his houſe. And he took them the ſame hour of the night, and waſhed their ſtripes, and was baptized, he and all his ſtraitway. And when he had brought them into his houſe, he ſet meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his houſe.*

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The fact here I thought ſtood thus—The jailor under the power of ſtrong convictions cries out, what muſt I do to be ſaved? The apoſtle anſwers, believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved, and thine houſe: that is as I underſtood it, if they believe alſo: upon which they ſpake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his houſe. And God bleſſing his word to the jailor and his family, they *believed*, were *baptized* and *rejoiced*.

This led me to conſider what is ſaid of *Criſpus* and the *Corinthians*. Acts xviii. 8.

And Criſpus the chief ruler of the ſynagogue believed on the Lord with all his houſe: and many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized.

Here I found the maſter and the family believers, and that the *Corinthians heard, believed*, and were *baptized*—And as hearing and believing are mentioned previous to the baptizing of the *Corinthians*; I concluded it was equally ſo, in the inſtance of *Criſpus* and his houſe.

The laſt inſtance I met with, was in 1 *Cor.* i. 14, 15, 16, which ſpeaks of the baptizing the houſhold of *Stephanas*. *I thank God I baptized none of you, but* Criſpus *and* Gaius: *leſt any ſhould ſay, that I had baptized in my own name; and I baptized alſo the houſehold of* Stephanas, *&c.*

What this houſhold was I gathered from the 16th chap. and 15th verſe, where the apoſtle ſays, *I beſeech you brethren, ye know the houſe of* Stephanas, *that it is the firſt fruits of* Achaia, *and that they have addicted themſelves to the miniſtry of the ſaints.* Whence I thought they could not be infants, but believers in Chriſt, converted and baptized by the apoſtle: or they could hardly be called *firſt-fruits*, and be ſaid to addict themſelves to the miniſtry of the ſaints whether we underſtand it of their relieving their wants or preaching the everlaſting goſpel.

Having thus gone through the hiſtory of baptiſm, as adminiſtered by the apoſtles, I proceeded to conſider the account they gave of the meaning or ſpiritual deſign of it: and with this view compared *Rom.* vi. 3, 4. with *Col.* ii. 12. *Know ye not that ſo many of us as were baptized into Jeſus Chriſt, were baptized into his death. Therefore we are buried with him by baptiſm into death: that like as Chriſt was raiſed up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even ſo we alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of life. For if we hav*

have been planted together in the likeneſs of his death, we ſhall be alſo in the likeneſs of his reſurrection, knowing that our old man is crucified, &c. And in *Coloſſians* I found the ſame metaphor kept up; *Buried with him in baptiſm, wherein alſo ye are riſen with him thro' the faith of the operation of God.*

In forming a judgment of the deſign of the Holy Ghoſt in theſe paſſages, I thought it neceſſary to conſider firſt the deſcription, or character of the perſons baptized; and they are ſaid, ver. 11th, *to be circumciſed with the circumciſion made without hands:* which I knew not how to interpret ſo well of any thing, as the *renewing influences* of the Holy Ghoſt: agreeably to which they are further repreſented as the ſubjects *of that faith which is of the operation of God:* or as it is elſewhere called * precious faith, and the faith of God's elect.

The metaphor came next under conſideration. They were *buried* with Chriſt in baptiſm: This ſeemed much better to anſwer to immerſion than ſprinkling or pouring—and ſuppoſing that the *faith* mentioned might refer to their being *buried* as well as riſing; this I thought might be the meaning of their being *planted in the likeneſs of Chriſt's death:* That as in the ordinance of the ſupper, there is a believing memorial of Chriſt's love in his ſufferings and death; ſo in baptiſm, the ſaint, by an eye of faith, is called to attend to his condeſcenſion when impriſoned in the grave, and his glory as a conqueror in breaking the bands of death: in each of which he ſuſtained the character of the ſurety of the covenant and head of the body.—And as the actions of breaking the bread and pouring out the wine, are expreſſive of his agony and death; the immerſion, and riſing of the perſon baptized, might refer to his burial and reſurrection.

I then proceeded to examine 1 *Cor.* vii. 14 a text I had often heard quoted as proving, if not in direct terms, yet by juſt conſequence, the right of infants to baptiſm. The words are, *For the unbelieving huſband is ſanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is ſanctified by the huſband: elſe were your children unclean, but now they are holy.*

I began with the occaſion of the words, and could find nothing relating to baptiſm in the context. An affair evidently of another kind, employed the mind of the apoſtle; to wit, the neceſſity or expediency of attending to the duties of the marriage-relation, where one was a convert, and the other an *infi-*

* 2 Pet. i. 1. Tit. i. 1.

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del. This I thought was the point in view. And it ſtands determined, that the *wife is not to depart*, nor the *huſband to put her away*; unleſs ſome other circumſtances ſhould render it neceſſary and warrantable.

And to remove the ſcruple of a tender ſpirit, it is added, that the unbeliever is ſanctified by the believer; by which I could not underſtand an internal ſpiritual purity of mind, this being the work of the Divine Spirit: But as every thing elſe, ſo the marriage-relation is ſanctified to the believer, by *the word of God and prayer*. The ignorance or enmity of the infidel, would not render the ſaint's conſcientious and faithful diſcharge of his duty leſs neceſſary or acceptable.

And to inforce his determination of their continuing together, the Apoſtle adds, *elſe were your children unclean, but now they are holy.*——

Here I conſidered, how children may be ſaid to be unclean; and I thought they are all ſo by *nature*, being *ſhapen in iniquity*, and *conceived in ſin*. The guilt and pollution of which, can only be removed by the blood of Chriſt, and the power of the Holy Ghoſt. As to this I could ſee no difference between the ſeed of believers, and others; all are *concluded under ſin*, and by *nature children of wrath*.

I then remember to have heard, that all out of the pale of the Jewiſh church were unclean, as oppoſed to that holineſs which is attributed to the whole congregation of *Iſrael*, and that ſuch uncleanneſs attends the children of unconverted *Gentiles* now: But conſidering *Peter*'s viſion, in which he is forbid to *call that common which God hath cleanſed:* That *the middle wall of partition is broken down:* That in regeneration, or, the *new man, there is neither* Greek, *nor* Jew, *circumciſion, nor uncircumciſion, Barbarian* Scythian, *bond nor free, but Chriſt is all and in all* —Remembering the peculiars of the Jewiſh church, as *hereditary* and *national*, are now utterly ſet aſide, I could ſee no more uncleanneſs in one infant than in another.

Upon the whole, I thought the affair ſettled by the apoſtle wholly matrimonial: it was highly probable, the *holineſs* and *uncleanneſs* were of the ſame kind: or related to apparent legitimacy or illegitimacy.

Nor could I ſee on the ſuppoſition of an external ſort of holineſs derived to an infant from a believing parent, that we are

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to conclude its right to baptiſm without a ſpecial direction from the lawgiver of the church *.

This led me to conſider the apoſtle's account of *Abraham*, Rom. iv. 11, 12, 13. *As the father of all them that believe though they be not circumciſed; and that the promiſe is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end it might be ſure to all the ſeed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that alſo which is of the faith of* Abraham, *who is the father of us all. And that he received the ſign of circumciſion, a ſeal of the righteouſneſs of faith, which he had yet being uncircumciſed*, &c.

This I found commonly inſiſted on to prove that *Abraham's* covenant was the covenant of grace—That a part of his ſeed were the believing *Gentiles*, and their offſpring: and that as *Abraham's* children were circumciſed, the children of believers ſhould be baptized.

To come at a certainty in this matter, I thought it might be proper, carefully to enquire what the covenant was which God made with *Abraham*: the duties required, and privileges to be enjoyed under it; perſons intereſted in it and manner of conveying and ſignifying that intereſt. The covenant I found at large in the 17th of *Geneſis*, and it appeared to me to be of a *peculiar* kind; ſome things belonging to *Abraham* in his *perſonal* character, as that he ſhould have a numerous poſterity; that kings ſhould deſcend from him; the making over the land of *Canaan* to him; and the particular honour of being the father of the Meſſiah according to the fleſh. This part of the covenant I thought diſtinguiſhable from the covenant of grace: for I could not but ſee he might have all theſe, without any ſpecial relation to God as a child—But when God promiſes to be *his God*, to *bleſs him*, and that *in his ſeed all the families of the earth ſhould be bleſſed*; I looked upon theſe to be promiſes as expreſſive of privileges of *another*, and more valuable kind than any of the former.

And as the covenant appeared thus to be of a mixt nature, and the bleſſings diſtinct; ſo I found this ſeed to be deſcribed very differently in ſcripture: ſometimes intending *all his natural children*; ſometimes the *perſon* of Chriſt only: and here, and in other places, all his *ſpiritual* offſpring, whether *Jews* or *Gentiles*.

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* If the baptiſm of infants may be juſtified from this paſſage, ſo may the baptiſm of the *unbelieving* huſband and the *unbelieving* wife; for they are ſaid to be *ſanctified* or *holy*, as well as their children.

As to his children, who are only ſo after the fleſh, they had their outward advantages: but not as I could ſee the bleſſings of the covenant of grace.

As to Chriſt, it did not appear any bleſſing was derived from *Abraham* to him; but on the contrary, *Abraham* received the bleſſing in, and from the Meſſiah, his *root* as well as offſpring. And as to his ſpiritual ſeed, they were all, whether *Jews* or *Gentiles*, partakers with him of the ſame faith and ſalvation.

Circumciſion I thought to be a ſign or badge of ſeparation to the *Jew*, in common, as diſtinguiſhed from the *Gentiles*, and perhaps of regeneration to his ſpiritual ſeed: but conveyed, as I could ſee no ſpiritual bleſſing to either. And I thought if the baptiſm of infants under the goſpel was to be argued from circumciſion; the Apoſtle would certainly have given ſome hint of it; whereas his diſcourſe is confined to believers, without a word of their children.

That circumciſion was a ſeal of the righteouſneſs of faith to *Abraham*, is indeed aſſerted; but that it was, to his natural ſeed, I could form no idea of: at leaſt till they had by faith, a view of the ſame righteouſneſs, by which *Abraham* their father was juſtified.

And the apoſtle ſeems to explain the whole matter, *Rom.* ix. 5, 6, 7, 8. *They are not all* Iſrael, *which are of* Iſrael, *neither becauſe they are of the ſeed of* Abraham, *are they all children; that is they which are the children of the fleſh, theſe are not the children of God, but the children of the promiſe are counted for the ſeed.*—Now I concluded, if this was true of the natural ſeed of *Abraham*, a believer, certainly it could be no leſs ſo of the offſpring of the *Gentile* believers.

As to the privileges of the *Jews* above the *Gentiles*, the apoſtle is expreſs, that unto them *pertained the adoption, and the glory and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the ſervice of God and the promiſes: and that from them, as concerning the fleſh, Chriſt came, who is over all, God bleſſed for ever.* Rom ix. 4, 5. o agreeable to what he before had ſaid, when putting the queſtion *what advantage then hath the* Jew, *or what profit is there in circumciſion?* He anſwers, *much every way: chiefly becauſe unto them were committed the oracles of God.*

So that it evidently appeared the church of the *Jews* had glory; but as the ſame apoſtle tells us, 2 *Cor.* iii. 10, 11. th

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was as *no glory, if compared with the glory which excelleth. But if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.*—That is, as I underſtood it, all the carnal part of Jewiſh glory was ſwallowed up, and utterly ſet aſide by the ſimplicity, ſpirituality, and liberty of the goſpel-diſpenſation; and as it was formerly, *All were not* Iſrael, *which were of* Iſrael; ſo now *he is not a* Jew, *which is one outwardly, neither is that circumciſion, which is outwardly in the fleſh; but he is a* Jew, *which is one inwardly, and circumciſion is that of the heart, in the ſpirit, and not in the letter, whoſe praiſe is not of men, but of God.* Rom. ii. ver. 28, 29.

I then proceeded to conſider the exciſion of the *Jews*, and the taking in of the *Gentiles*, recorded, *Rom.* xi. 15, 16. in which, though there is no expreſs mention of Baptiſm or of the baptiſm of infants, yet I found commonly produced as declarative of a federal holineſs, conveyed from parents to children in conſequence of which they *might*, yea *ought* to be baptized.

The words of the text are.

If the firſt-fruit be holy, the lump is alſo holy: and if the root be holy, ſo are the branches; and if ſome of the branches be broken off, and thou being a wild olive-tree wert grafted in among them, and with them partakeſt of the root and fatneſs of the olive tree, &c.

That converted *Gentiles* ſtand on a level with believing *Jews* I had already ſeen. That the peculiar form of the Jewiſh church was aboliſh'd at the death of Chriſt, I found generally acknowledged; that being the *miniſtration which was to be done away*, to make room for that *which was to remain:* ſo that I could not tell how to conceive of the Goſpel-church incorporated with the Jewiſh, they being always repreſented as diſtinct, or diſtinguiſhable the one from the other.

By the root then I underſtood *Abraham*—By the branches his natural offspring—By the wild olive the *Gentiles* in a natural ſtate; who upon receiving the grace of God became the ſpiritual branches of *Abraham* the father of the faithful: and were equally intereſted with his believing natural branches, in all the ſpecial privileges of the covenant of grace.

This I thought to be the moſt natural ſenſe of the text; nor could I ſee how this could have any relation to Baptiſm, whether of the adult or infants.—

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The next reference to Baptiſm I found, 1 *Cor.* X. 1, 2. *I would not that you ſhould be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all paſſed through the ſea, and were all baptized unto Moſes, in the cloud, and in the ſea.*

To underſtand this I thought it proper to enquire into the *fact*, as recorded by *Moſes*, which I thought would give light to the alluſion.

And in *Exod.* xiv. 19. we are told the *pillar of cloud went from before the face of the* Iſraelites, *and ſtood behind them; that it came between the camp of the* Egyptians *and the camp of* Iſrael, *and it was a cloud and darkneſs to the one, and gave light by night to the other. And that the Lord cauſed the ſea to go back by a ſtrong eaſt wind all that night, and made the ſea dry land: and the children of* Iſrael *went into the midſt of the ſea upon dry ground, and the waters were a wall unto them, on the right hand and left.*

Here I found that part of the cloud which was next to the *Iſraelites* was bright, clear, and comfortable; nor the leaſt intimation of *rain* falling upon them. The ſea was made *dry ground*, and the waters were a *wall* unto them, on the right hand, and on the left; ſo that I concluded, the term *baptized* muſt refer to their ſituation in the midſt of the ſea, encompaſſed by theſe walls, and attended with the cloud, rather than to any water coming out of the one, or ſprinkling daſhings from the other; which muſt have been very troubleſome, to ſuch a body of people in their march; and as I thought inconſiſtent with the account of their ſtanding in, and coming out of the ſea on *dry ground*.

This brought me to the laſt place of ſcripture, which ſpeaks directly to the nature and meaning of the ordinance of Baptiſm 1 *Pet.* iii. 20, 21. *The long-ſuffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was preparing: wherein few, that is eight ſouls were ſaved by water. The like figure whereunto, even baptiſm, doth alſo now ſave us, (not the putting away of the filth of the fleſh, but the anſwer of a good conſcience towards God) by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt.*

Here it appeared that there were ſome circumſtances attending the ark, and the ſalvation of *Noah* and his family by water which were figurative or typical of Baptiſm; and when I examined the account as given by *Moſes*, *Gen.* vii. I found it ſtood thus; the ark was God's contrivance and appointment, and

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was a large hollow veſſel, in which *Noah* and his family, and the creatures with him, were for a time as it were buried; and eſpecially this was the caſe, when the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, and they in the midſt of that deluge, which deſtroyed all the world. This appeared to me to anſwer to immerſion in Baptiſm; and I could not think the Holy Ghoſt would refer us to the water of a *flood*, as a type of a *little* quantity of that element, made uſe of when poured or ſprinkled on the face of an infant. And as *Noah* and his family were ſaved by water; the believer is ſaved by Baptiſm, not efficaciouſly or meritoriouſly, but declaratively and inſtrumentally. In the profeſſion of his faith, he declares his entrance into Chriſt as the ark of ſalvation; and his Baptiſm is a lively repreſentation of the burial and reſurrection of him, who died for his offences, and roſe again for his juſtification.

And as *Noah* built the ark, and entered into it in obedience to the command of God; the believer is baptized from a principle of *conſcience* towards God; yea a *good*, that is, as I thought, an enlightened, renewed conſcience.

Having thus gone through the ſcripture account of the ordinance of Baptiſm, I found myſelf obliged to conclude the ballance was greatly on the ſide of adult believers, as the only declared ſubjects; and of plunging or immerſion, as the only mode of that ſacred inſtitution.

I well knew that many godly and learned perſons thought otherwiſe; but not daring to call any man maſter on earth, and remembering the account I muſt ſhortly give to him, who ſaid, *thus it becometh us to fulfil righteouſneſs*; I determined to comply with my duty; and on the cloſeſt reflection, have ſeen no reaſon to repent of it.

F I N I S.

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